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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the basic principles and objectives of an educational approach based on "values confrontation" and evaluates its impact on student values, feelings, and behavior. After stressing the importance of forming a modern pedagogy concerned with developing rational thinking and deeper personal and social awareness, the paper presents assumptions concerning college students based on insights from anthropological, sociological, and developmental psychology studies. Next, the course "In Search of Value" is described in terms of its major emphasis on awareness of society and human behavior and on alternative social structures and value systems; and in terms of its specific elements, i.e., social self-analysis, values confrontation, transference, cognitive dissonance, psychological guidance, academic skills development, and phenomenological evaluation. Next, the paper explains several course activities, including the maintenance of a reflective log/journal in which students react, critically analyze, and imagine alternatives; discussions based on students' personal reactions to course material; and self-disclosures by the instructor. Finally, the paper presents conclusions about the courses' effectiveness based on student evaluations and discusses the educational implications of the values confrontation approach. Appendices present the course evaluation instrument and sample student responses, and a course description.

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THE PEDAGOGY OF VALUE-CONFRONTATION

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"Philosophic thought is the most practical of human activities because conception is a precondition to action." (Karl Popper) Since the time of Socrates the western liberal educational tradition has been concerned with education as the development of the critical faculty, knowledge of self and society ('the unexamined life is not worth living') and the expansion of intellectual interests into aesthetics and political education and action.

Harold Taylor, (among other writers and critics) in his masterful work "Students Without Teachers" has shown how institutions of higher learning have consistently betrayed these pedagogical ideals by their emphasis on credentialling, fragmenting the liberal arts curriculum into autonomous disciplines without any connecting links and other administrative irrationalities.¹ In addition, the existence of thousands of new 'clients' of higher education (who Patricia Cross refers to as the 'New Student') who do not seem to possess natural academic talents and high scholastic status make a 'new' type of pedagogy an educational necessity.

¹ Taylor, H. Students Without Teachers: The Crisis in the University.
N.Y. Avon, 1970.

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In a world which is always close to the brink of ecological and nuclear disaster and where human beings must be their most rational and critical if they are to survive another decade, it is imperative that a modern pedagogy concerned with developing rational thinking and deeper personal and social awareness become an absolute necessity for institutions of higher learning.

For the past 12 years in three different courses 'In Search of Man', 'In Search of Value' and 'Future Alternatives' I have tried to develop a pedagogy which attempts to fulfill the Socratic objective of a critical and intellectually involving education. In this paper I will attempt to describe the basic principles and objectives of this kind of 'value confrontation' teaching and critically evaluate its impact on student values, feelings and behavior.

Quite naturally (because of my training in the social sciences and educational theory) my theoretical conceptions concerning the nature of the student and the teaching-learning process come both from sociological theory and developmental psychology literature as well as texts on educational issues or teaching and learning theory.²

² Wagschal, H. Values-Education-Towards a Theory and Practice of Cultural Transformation. Eric Information Services National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C. No. 133274.

THE STUDENT

Some basic social science assumptions concerning the student include the following:

Anthropological Implications

Student a product of cultural and contemporary social influences, particularly mass media and popular music.

Sociological Implications

Students' consciousness and values determined largely by his role in various institutional settings such as the family or the school.

Developmental Psychology Implications

All students are at various levels of moral and intellectual growth with a large majority capable of substantial possibilities for cognitive ethical development.³

³ Hamachek, Don E., (ed.). The Self in Growth Teaching and Learning. Prentice-Hall, N.J. 1965.

THE COURSE STRUCTURE

Major conceptions of the teaching-learning-process included teaching as an inter-actional-dialogic process which placed the teacher in both a guiding-consulting and leadership position but also involved students as catalysts to help their fellow students. Some major curriculum dimensions of the course involved:

1. Awareness of society and human behaviour.

Milton Rokeach's and George Brown's research on values and teaching suggests that the traditional teaching of the social sciences or humanities must be replaced by a new way of integrating a students' own perceptions, feelings, and needs into the subject matter.⁴

2. Alternatives to contemporary forms of man's social experiences such as religion, education, the family and his political system.

Students should be given the opportunity to observe alternative structures and play an actual role in them as part of their field experiences. Some specific value concerns of people of all ages include topics such as the concept of 'self', 'society', the meaning of work and leisure, deviance, the philosophy of existentialism, human needs, friendship and love.

⁴ Rokeach, M. The Nature of Human Values. Free Press. 1976.
Brown, George Human Teaching for Human Learning, Penguin 1977.

In somewhat more specific terms the course 'In Search of Value' utilized the following elements:

1. Social self-analysis.

Here the student confronts the general and social and cultural factors in his own life which have affected him and presently influence his decision making. A biographical log linking a student's personal experience with key ideas of the course is probably the best way to deal with this area.

2. Values-confrontation.

Here the student is confronted with alternatives to his present life situation through student-produced class presentations. Topics might include alternatives to family, education, self, aesthetic perception or political structures.

3. Transference.

Instructor shares his own value conflicts, anxieties and previous value crisis in class. Guest speakers who have experienced value-crisis (ex-criminal, ex-priests, attempted suicides) are invited to address the class.

4. Cognitive-Dissonance.

Much interest in the role of values in an individual life or society can arise from a lively heterogeneous group of students who have had widely differing social class and cultural backgrounds. Many students possessing 'stable' value structures will be puzzled by the arguments of those who disagree with their position. Hopefully, this bewilderment will lead to a heightened interest in knowledge and new ideas.

5. Psychological-guidance.

Very close links will be established between students, guidance centres, and other psychological services to counsel students who need assistance in dealing with occupational choices or other personal problems.

6. Academic Skills Development.

Many opportunities for the development of intellectual organization, analytical writing and communication skills will exist in a program of this type. Assignments should reflect natural development of interest and should be integrated into the major issues of the course.

7. Phenomenological Evaluation.

Phenomenological evaluation of students change in perceptions, feelings,

attitudes towards course material, peers and instructor. At present Shostrom's 'Personal Orientation Inventory' Rokeach's 'Values Survey' and Kohlberg's 'Moral Development Interview' has some use in a 'pre-test' 'post-test' situation. Educationally-oriented tests on the effects of values courses have yet to be written.

THE REFLECTIVE LOG

One of the major tools to involve the student directly with the course material was the 'Reflective Log' which was used continuously throughout the course for students to react, comment, critically analyse and imagine alternatives.⁵

EVALUATION

Though it was a college regulation that marks had to be assigned, work was evaluated in terms of:

1. Actual reading and participation in weekly small group seminars
2. Quality of log - level of complexity of ideas under consideration, intellectual imagination, extra research.
3. Presentation by two students working together on some aspect of 'values' including various philosophical positions, ethical dilemmas, etc.

⁵ Wagschal, H. 'Involving the Student's Self through a Reflective Log.' History & Social Science Teacher, Vol. 13.3, Spring 1978.

The actual technique of value confrontation was always taking place during the course.

1. In the small group seminars students would discuss their own value priorities with other students while the instructor would question their reasons for having formulated certain value positions (this obviously lead to the awareness of how culture, religion and family have affected their belief structures).
2. Students were asked to react in terms of their own personal experiences to the course material under consideration. This lead to many fruitful discussions and key lectures concerning the nature of technological society, the role of families and peer groups on influencing values and the impact of differing philosophical perspectives on man's nature from Christianity to Socio-biology.

Another technique which was used to make it easier for students to reflect on their own personal experiences was for the instructor to share many of his own deepest value conflicts and personal experience with the class or what the late psychologist Sidney Jourard has called "Self-Disclosure" when the instructor stated a value position on a issue. However, he was responsible for letting the class know that it was his personal value position which they might praise or attack in their journals. A values confrontation pedagogy never means 'brain washing' or forcing a student to hold certain ideological or religious position (as pointed out at the 1st Global Conference on the Future, Toronto, Canada, July 1980. Propaganda

and education are definitely not synonymous no matter how humanistic or well-intentioned the professor.⁶ The major purpose of a values confrontation pedagogy was to produce an aware, critical student who is able to deal at some level with certain basic views about the nature of his society and his own relationship to these ideas. Another major objective of this technique is to create an interest in ideas within the student - as expressed through writing in his journal, extra unassigned reading and applying certain philosophical assumptions to his own personal life.

EVALUATION

At the end of the course students were handed a questionnaire to be filled in anonymously (see appendix). Journals were evaluated for quantity and quality of written work, level of intellectual sophistication, personal insight and extra-reading achieved.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Based upon 60 questionnaires (condensed sample in appendix) of male and female students with a median age of 18 from a variety of university and technology programs including the social sciences, mechanical technology, creative arts, and pure and applied sciences, it seemed that the following tentative conclusions are warranted by the research:

⁶ Diebold, F., Beagle, R., Wagschal, H. & Grinberg M. Changing Human Values and Higher Education. (Panel Discussion 1st Global Conference on the Future, Toronto, Canada July 24, 1980) (Audio tape available from conference tapes 8 Woodburn Drive, Ottawa, Ontario. Document available from Eric National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C.)

1. Nearly all the students found the course content stimulating and interesting from an educationally theoretical perspective. It would seem that linking the student's 'evolving self' with social and philosophical theory is extremely effective in higher and post-secondary education.
2. Many students reported that they were able to link course material with their own personal lives thus creating a dynamic learning situation which probably has learning implications long after the course is over. Longitudinal research over a 10 or 15 year period on how these students made important personal decisions about marriage, children, career and lifestyle would be most useful.
3. The most effective topic area was the close examination of students present 'values' since many of them had never considered the area previously.
4. The journal was found to be extremely useful to nearly all students even though there is so much written about 'illiteracy' and lack of interest in reading and writing among students in our contemporary educational institutions. The quality and quantity (some students wrote over 150 pages over a 15 week period) was quite surprising.
5. Inviting guest speakers who had experienced serious value and emotional crises or someone who represented a totally different type of value system had a distinct impact on making students reflect on their own belief system and priorities in life.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. It is difficult to assess whether any permanent value changes actually took place during the semester. Research over a much longer period of time would be required.
2. Motivation to engage in this kind of course structure did not seem to be related to previous academic studies.
3. Most surprising and pedagogically gratifying was the fact that actual interest and involvement in 'literacy' skills of 'reading' 'writing' and 'discussion' were consistently demonstrated by a majority of students from both academic and career type programs. In a rapidly changing 'value shifting' technological society philosophical and social dilemmas of the type mentioned in this paper might be extremely significant for students at the early undergraduate years of college and university in helping them to acquire basic literacy skills.

APPENDIX

1. Rokeach Values Inventory - (terminal & instrumental)
2. Evaluative questionnaire on students' reaction to course
3. Condensed sample of students' responses to questionnaire

PROGRAMME: _____ AGE: _____ SEX: _____ YEAR: (circle one) 1st 2nd 3rd

This course discussed the following areas of concern:

1. How values are formed in the individual (your own values),
2. Values of contemporary industrial society (advertising),
3. Psychoanalysis and values (mental health and mental illness),
4. Eastern and yogic values,
5. Existentialism,
6. Parents and children,
7. The teens,
8. High school years.

I. WHICH AREA OF THE COURSE HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOU?

II. DID ANY OF THE COURSE MATERIAL CHANGE YOUR VIEWS AND/OR ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIETY OR YOURSELF?

III. IF ANY CHANGES TOOK PLACE, WERE THEY IN:-

- 1) your attitude towards yourself?
- 2) your attitude towards your parents?
- 3) your attitude towards school and employment?
- 4) your attitude towards life and existence?
- 5) your attitude towards your peer group?
- 6) your attitude towards advertising and television?

PLEASE EXPLAIN, IN DETAIL, ANY CHANGES WHICH MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED.

IV. DID YOU FIND THE JOURNAL USEFUL? HOW AND WHY?

V. DID YOU FIND ANY PART OF THE COURSE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBING? PLEASE EXPLAIN.

ROKEACH VALUE SURVEY

RANK EACH VALUE IN ITS ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO YOU.

1. _____ Ambitious (hard-working aspiring)
2. _____ Broadminded (open-minded)
3. _____ Capable (competent, effective)
4. _____ Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful)
5. _____ Clean (neat tidy)
6. _____ Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
7. _____ Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
8. _____ Helpful (working for the welfare of others)
9. _____ Honest (sincere truthful)
10. _____ Imaginative (daring, creative)
11. _____ Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
12. _____ Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)
13. _____ Logical (consistent, rational)
14. _____ Loving (affectionate, tender)
15. _____ Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
16. _____ Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
17. _____ Responsible (dependable, reliable)
18. _____ Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)

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15. _____ Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
16. _____ Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
17. _____ Responsible (dependable, reliable)
18. _____ Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)

CONDENSED SAMPLE OF STUDENTS' RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONNAIRE
(Raw data available on request)

SCIENCE MALE 18

"Enjoyed comparing values with classmates. Learnt about their values and their reactions when a situation threatens their values."

"More aware of other people's feelings. Found Journal useful for it helped to 'let out' emotion."

SOCIAL SCIENCE FEMALE 18

"Before I was lost and I really learnt a lot from discussing things I really wasn't sure about myself."

"Changed attitudes towards myself, parents, school life, peers and television."

"Everything has new meaning to me."

"Journal useful as I would come to terms with myself."

COMMERCE MALE 18

"Existentialism captured my thoughts about the world."

"Attitude towards advertising and television definitely changed." "Saw the influence of big business and distortions of media."

"Journal useful since I could see how my views changed."

CREATIVE ARTS FEMALE 18

"The teens - saw links between problems and my own personal life." "Learnt more about my own values."

"Change led to a struggle to be more honest with myself and peer group."

SOCIAL SCIENCE

FEMALE

18

"Section on how values are formed really forced me to look at myself for the first time discovered what my values were."

"Aware of competition created by advertising."

"Material really made me stop and think outside, after class, as well as during the lecture."

COMMERCE

MALE

19

"When I have free time I begin to question the way I have been living."

"Changed attitude towards self. Don't believe that I am living life to full potential."

"Journal extremely useful."

SOCIAL SCIENCE

FEMALE

18

"Existentialism makes you have second thoughts about God and life."

"More aware of things I value - parents."

"Found Journal useful."

"Found existentialism disturbing and depressing."

SOCIAL SCIENCE

MALE

19

"Great changes towards life and existence."

"Journal helped realization about self."

"Discussing death disturbed me."

SOCIAL SCIENCE

FEMALE

19

"After taking this course, I find that I look at myself and my world very differently, in that I am very much more aware of my surroundings."

HUMANITIES/PHILOSOPHY COURSE DESCRIPTION FORM

SUBJECT: Humanities 101

SESSION: (Summer, Regular 1.e.
Fall/Winter, Conted) _____

COURSE OR CATEGORY NO. 345-101

COURSE TITLE: In Search of Value

INSTRUCTOR: Harry G. Wagschal

CAMPUS: Selby

TIME PREFERENCE: _____

OTHER SPECIFICATIONS: _____

OBJECTIVE:

1. To examine one's values and beliefs by analysing the cultural and ideological basis for one's value system.
2. To reflect seriously on one's values and confront oneself with opposing values and beliefs.
3. To critically analyse a complex piece of writing and learn basic skills of academic research.

CONTENT:

1. Values and self-knowledge
2. Values in Technological Society
3. Perspectives on 'Human Nature'
4. The existential Dilemma
5. Values and Humanistic Psychology

METHODOLOGY:

1. Small group discussion based upon assigned weekly readings.
2. Lecture, presentations, guests, speakers, films.

EVALUATION:

Reflective log 50%
Short Assignments on readings 25%
Book review 25%

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Culture Against Man - Jules, Henry
Seven Theories of Human Nature - Stevenson

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